

## Dr N. Singh

*“It’s not clear why you would believe that.”*

Dr. N. Singh is a **paleontologist**, famous for describing various dinosaur and prehistoric mammalian specimens. They are an expert in human and animal **biology**, with in depth understanding of **medical knowledge**. They are a **skeptic**.

### Background

You are a famous paleontologist, known for various reconstruction work, like that of *Hypacrosaurus altispinus*. You have recently been contacted by Professor Gregory Jenkins, the head of Princeton’s department of Archeology and Antiquities. Apparently an expedition has discovered some unusual fossil specimens on a Greek Island in the Aegean sea, a strange chimera between human and reptile. You’re interested in finding out more. Better yet, Prof. Jenkins wishes for you to visit this island and help excavate the specimens. And you wonder: if there are fossil specimens on the island, might there not be a living specimen? Think of the fame of capturing a living chimera!

### Setting the Scene

Prof. Jenkins wants to meet you in person, and his department pays for your trip to Princeton. Soon you find yourself amongst a group of four other people in Prof. Jenkins’s lavish third floor office: Prof Jenkins himself; Dr. Bowen, an archaeologist; Prof. Giles, a classicist and philologist; and Dr. Wrona, a psychologist and specialist in the occult.

Prof. Jenkins is an old man close to 70. He walks slowly, with an obvious limp, and supports himself with an ornate cane. His office is fairly luxurious, with a large, solid wooden desk sitting in front of the windows. Various antiquities decorate the office: pottery in glass cabinets, statues great and small on desks and shelves, weapons and armor hang on display. Most of the artifacts appear to be Greek, or related to Greek mythology.

After passing out drinks (whiskey, coffee and tea), Prof. Jenkins explains the work that he has brought you together for.

A few months ago, **Dr James Templeton** from the department led an expedition to explore the ruins of the **Acropolis Achlys** on **Kleitos Island**, one of the Greek islands in the Aegean sea. Achlys was rumored to have once been the home to one of the darker mystery cults that had built a community for itself around the **Oracle of Echidna**, who was one of the chthonic Greek gods, a nymph who was often called the **Mother of all Monsters**. This was the only known Oracle to the god, and Templeton had reported that his team had found the ruins and begun the excavation work.

“Three months ago,” Jenkins says, “James sent this letter and a roll of 620 film, which I’ve had developed” He hands you note 1.

“As you can see,” he says, “we’re in need of a paleontologist. **Dr Singh**, well, you were James’s first choice. And so here you are. Your work on the reconstruction of the *Hypacrosaurus altispinus* specimen was really quite exemplary. And surely there will be a paper in this Kleitos work as well, a first description of a possibly new class or even phylum of the animal kingdom.” Jenkins takes out a collection of large, black and white photographs. They show the petrified specimen still half buried in sediment.

Prof Jenkins  
Department of Archeology and Antiquities  
Princeton University  
Princeton, New Jersey  
USA

Dr. James Templeton  
Kleitos Island  
c/o Demetrios Patsatzoglou, Magnisias Town

Dear Gregory,

I hope this letter finds you well.

We have made an amazing discovery! A week ago we found the petrified remains of the strangest creature buried in the tomb region of the Oracle: a chimera of sorts, some blend of snake and human, like the lamia or drakaina of mythology. We estimate it to be perhaps 6.5 ft in length, perhaps 7, although how high it stood (if indeed it could even stand), we do not know.

I've attached photographs. As you can see, the corpse is still firmly embedded in the matrix.

Send us a paleontologist who feels confident that they can safely exhume this thing. Dr Singh of Columbia University is my recommendation, but I leave the decision up to you.

All the best,

James Templeton

*Note 1: Letter, from James Templeton to Gregory Jenkins*

You notice that the chimera appears as described in the letter: a strange mixture of reptilian lower body and mammalian upper body. The image is too poor to tell if this is merely a biological abnormality or not, or even a fake — but if this is not a fake, then surely it will be one of the most important finds in recent history, and enough to not only raise your fading star, but likely keep your name in the limelights. “This is definitely not of any known class of animal,” you inform the group.

Bowen looks at the pictures, and says, “That looks like limestone matrix. It was wise of Templeton to ask for experienced help: that rock can be harder than concrete.”

“Unfortunately,” Prof. Jenkins says, “there have been complications, which necessitates us sending a larger group of people, a second expedition, if you will.” It seems that the letter was the last communication with Dr. Templeton and his team. He has not responded to any further written communication, nor to any radio communiques. A group from the *University of Athens* had visited the island to look for the team, but found the team's rented house on the island abandoned, ransacked, and covered in blood. The local police had said that the body of a half eaten goat had been found on their kitchen table, and that the team was suspected of being involved in some dark cult.

Beware the darkness from which they climb. Seekers will be watched.

*Note 2: A letter in Arabic. The right edge is stained a rusty brown.*

Worse, the team's camp at the Acropolis was full of bullet holes, which the police explained as being the by product of a populous keen on chasing the archaeologists from the island. No bodies have been found, and a fisherman had reported that the archaeologists had hired him to transport them to Athens. The local police have assumed that Templeton and his team left the island of their own free will.

The teams current whereabouts are unknown — if they had even reached Athens at all.

“This is an important find, not only to the University, but to the scientific community at large. It might not only shift our understanding of animal biology and evolutionary history, but of our own history. And so I want the four of you to go to Kleitos, secure the find, and to reach the bottom of whatever the hell is happening on that island.”

“**Dr Bowen**, you have, um —” and here Jenkins seems a bit uncomfortable, “— a reputation. As a bit of a maverick, with a good feeling for violence and when to employ it. And while I hope those skills won't be required, we need someone like you to help secure the site, ensure the safety of the team members, and to lead the investigation into what happened to Dr. Templeton and his team on the island. If they're still on the island, find them if you can. If they've met an untimely demise, inform the authorities.”

“**Professor Giles**, why I asked you hear is pretty straight forward. Your knowledge of ancient Greek history, language and mythology is unsurpassed. Your translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are standards works in our undergraduate courses. This, and you're, um, devotion to Nyx will provide insights into the minds of any possible cultists on the island. And I understand that you're also fairly familiar with Arabic, yes?” Jenkins hands Giles note 2.

Giles reads the letter, then says, “Well, it's written in a combination of classical and modern standard Arabic. Let me translate it,” and then reads the translation. “I can't say I recognize or understand the reference, though.”

Dr. Wrona speaks up: “Beware the darkness from which they climb. That's a reference from the Book of the Dead, an occult text.”

“The Book of the Dead?” Jenkins says. “I haven't heard of it. But that is why I want you here, **Dr. Wrona** — your studies in the occult intrigue me. We seem to have some cultist group involved in this, and your studies in the mind of the cultist and the superstitious might come in useful. I was hoping that you and Professor Giles could determine what cult activities Dr. Templeton was involved in, and to support Dr. Bowen in uncovering the truth of Dr Templeton and his lost team.”

Prof. Jenkins has booked you all rooms on the RMS Queen Mary, thus beginning your trip across the Atlantic and continental Europe. In addition, the department has **provided the team with \$1000**, which you convert to 150 000 Drachma in Athens. You and the others are aware of the high purchasing power of this money, and go about **buying what gear you feel you might need** on Kleitos island.

You then find a small sailing vessel, a fisherman's boat, to take you on the trip to Kleitos. The fisherman is **Joachim Georgiadis**, and he helps the four of you to load your belongings.

The next day a fog settles in around the ship, and apart from the breeze all is still. The sun begins to set, but Joachim seems to know where he is going, and says that you will soon be at your destination: the port of Magnisias, Kleitos island.

## Kleitos Island

This is what you're told about the island: Kleitos is a small island. It has only one town, **Magnisias**, which lies on its southern coastline. Magnisias has seen use as a fishing village and port since antiquity. At the island's center, on a hilltop, lies the **Acropolis Achlys**. The ruins are now completely abandoned, and Dr. Templeton's team had reported that few of the island's small population of residents ever visited.

Kleitos has no electricity and few cars. Carts, donkeys and mules are still in common use.

## What you know of the others

**Prof Giles:** you have never met. Antiquity is not one of your fortes.

**Dr. Bowen:** you know them by reputation only, as a good field-expedition lead, willing to get the job done.

**Dr. Wrona:** you've occasionally read their work, but you've had little use for thoughts on the occult, except as to why people are prone to superstitious thinking.

**Dr. Templeton:** you briefly worked together in excavating a bog-man in England. He seemed dedicated to his job, and a quick thinker.

## The specimen

Oh, this specimen is your chance to keep your name amongst the stars. Even better, there are many stories from the area of serpentine people, bolstering the possibility that this find is not a fake. Now, if you could find a *living* specimen, and capture it ...

The specimen might have inspired some of these mythological beasts:

- **Drakaina** — Female dragons, but usually somewhat human like. For instance, they may be human from the waist up, serpent from the waist down. Sometimes they may appear completely human (such as Python), or completely reptilian. Echidna may be a drakaina.
- **Lamia** — Child eating demons, in the form of women with a snake's body. These are sometimes thought to be the same as the drakaina. The first lamia was the beautiful queen of Libya, who became a child eating demon, while the snake-like form is attributed to John Keats, and his poem, *Lamia*.

## Attributes

ST	10	HP	10	Languages: Broken Greek (written / spoken) Fluent English (written / spoken)
DX	10	Will	14	
IQ	12	Per	12	
HT	10	FP	10	

Basic Lift	20 pounds	Damage	Thrust	1d-2	Swing	1d
Basic Speed	5	Basic Move		5		

## Skills

Name	Level
Research	11
Teaching	10
Writing	12
Guns	8
Knives	8
Dodge	8
Parry	7 (with knife)
Physician	13
Biology	13
Philosophy	12
First Aid	13

## Advantages and Disadvantages

- **Healer:** A successful first-aid check will heal a character by 1d-2 hit points. This will take 30 minutes of time to perform.
- **Phobia of blood:** When you see blood, all actions that you perform are at -2. A successful will roll will negate this for a single action. The first time that you see blood, make a will roll: if you fail, you need to immediately move yourself to a location where you cannot see the blood. Make a successful will roll to return to that location.

## Inventory

- A medical bag, containing standard equipment, such as a stethoscope, scalpels, bandages, a syringe, and any simple medical items that GM feels is appropriate. Further, this contains
  - An ampule of morphine, with 4 uses.
  - An ampule of epinephrine, with 4 uses.
  - An ampule of elephant tranquillizer, with 2 uses.
  - Assorted simple drugs: paracetamol, caffeine, &c.

*The medical bag provides a +2 to Physician and first-aid rolls. The ampule of morphine temporarily heals someone for 1d health points. The extra health points last for an hour. The epinephrine temporarily fills a character's fatigue for one hour. The tranquillizer will put almost anything to sleep for an hour if they fail an HT check at -3. The simple drugs should have limited game-play affect, except for what the GM will allow you to get away with.*

*Repeated use of a drug does not stack its affects!*

- A camera, including a bulb flash and a box of ten bulbs.
- A pack of cigarettes and a bottle of strike-anywhere matches.

## Some Rules

The game is only played with 3d6s.

**The basic mechanic** is simple: every action that something important depends on and that is non-trivial should probably be rolled for. Choose one of the character's attributes (innate abilities) or skills (learned abilities). The player rolls 3d6, sums up the value, and if it is less than or equal to the score, they **succeed**.

A roll of 3 or 4 is a **critical success**. Have something extra good happen.

A roll of 17 or 18 is a **critical failure**. Have something bad happen. The gun jams. The radio shorts.